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ENVIRONMENT IN THE 1990s - CHALLENGES AND DEMANDS

Introductory Report of the Executive Director

Addendum

UNEP's participation in preparation for 1992 UNCED

1. Since the convening of the second special session of the Governing Council (from 1-3 August 1990), UNEP has been actively participating in the preparatory work for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), which will take place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 1 to 12 June 1992. In its decision SS.II/9 of 3 August 1990, the Governing Council outlined priority evolving environmental issues for consideration by the Preparatory Committee of UNCED and requested that the Executive Director ensure that UNEP contribute fully to the preparations of the Conference. Specifically, the Governing Council referred to a convention on climate change (section II); an international legal instrument on biodiversity (section X); transboundary air pollution (section III); protection of oceans and coastal areas (section IV); combating desertification (section V); the role of regional and subregional environment programmes (section VI); the availability of financial and other resources for developing countries and funding mechanisms (section VII); the transfer of environmentally sound technology (section IX); freshwater (section XI); and other issues for the attention of the Preparatory Committee - subjects in which UNEP could provide assistance.

2. Following the second special session of the Governing Council, the Preparatory Committee of UNCED (comprising representatives of many Governments, United Nations bodies and agencies, intergovernmental organizations and independent sectoral organizations) held its first substantive session in Nairobi from 6 to 27 August 1990. The Committee had before it, inter alia, the recommendations emanating from the second special session of the Governing Council. Addressing the Committee, the Executive Director presented the Council's recommendations and underlined three of its major concerns - the need for additional financial resources for developing countries to address environmental problems; the urgent need for technology transfer; and the need to determine concrete methodologies for integrating environmental considerations into each step of economic development planning.

3. During the course of its four-week deliberations in August 1990, the Preparatory Committee adopted no less than 30 decisions concerning substantive issues to be contained in the agenda of UNCED and the processes leading up to the Conference. Many of the issues and proposals raised by the Governing Council at its second special session figured prominently in the Committee's decisions. Some 70 reports were requested by the Committee and in 17 individual areas UNEP was called upon to provide an input.

4. Immediately following the August 1990 session of the Preparatory Committee, the secretariat reviewed how UNEP could contribute to the requests made: first, within on-going activities; second, where UNEP resources could be used for additional supplementary activities within the work programme; and third, where UNCED preparations would require additional work and financial support.

5. It was recognized that the initial preparations for UNCED were called for at a time when the UNEP secretariat faced a heavy workload in preparing the documentation for the sixteenth session of the Governing Council. It was clear that work could not start on a number of the reports requested from UNEP by the Preparatory Committee before the first quarter of 1991, most likely for submission to the third substantive session of the Preparatory Committee. However, UNEP had already compiled a great deal of information on many of the subject areas which UNCED was requested to address, and that information was transmitted to the UNCED secretariat. The Executive Director, after consultation and correspondence on these matters with the Secretary-General of UNCED, worked out a satisfactory method of collaboration.

6. In November 1990, the Executive Director transmitted to the Secretary-General of UNCED a large number of UNEP documents addressing each of the decisions of the UNCED Preparatory Committee. Meanwhile, UNEP staff participated in and continued to take part in the many and various preparatory working parties for UNCED.

7. UNEP's input into UNCED also comprises work on five major reports requested by the General Assembly, the Preparatory Committee, and the Governing Council. These include:

(a) A comprehensive study on desertification, covering the status of desertification itself, the state of implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification, and the modalities of financing anti-desertification plans on the global scale (General Assembly resolution 44/172 A of 19 December 1989);

(b) A state-of-the-environment report on changes in the state of the world environment since 1972 (Governing Council decision 15/13 A);

(c) A comprehensive strategy document, in co-operation with the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of Unesco, covering problems and remedies in the fields of oceans and coastal areas;

(d) An updated study on the full environmental impacts of the production and use of various energy sources;

(e) The report of the United Nations Secretary-General, based on the views of Governments and of bodies and agencies of the United Nations, reviewing the United Nations institutions dealing with the environment (General Assembly resolution 44/229 of 22 December 1990).

8. UNEP is continuing its support for two areas of major relevance to UNCED - secretariat and technical support is provided for negotiations on a convention on climate change and global warming; and UNEP services the negotiations on a convention on conservation of biological diversity.

9. The Executive Director has continued to hold regular and intensive consultations with the Secretary-General of UNCED. In addition, UNEP has taken part in other preparatory meetings and conferences for UNCED. The Executive Director took part in the European preparatory meeting in Bergen (May 1990) and the South-East Asian and Pacific ministerial preparatory meeting in Bangkok (October 1990), and made a statement at the World Industry Conference on Environmental Management (WICEM) in April 1991. UNEP staff took an active part in regional preparations for Africa (Bamako, January 1990), for Latin America and the Caribbean (Mexico City, March 1991), and will participate in the preparatory session for Africa, to be held in Cairo in September 1991.

10. The Executive Director, on 2 April 1991, provided a statement to the second meeting of the UNCED Preparatory Committee, pledging continued strong commitment to UNCED, recounting UNEP's input into UNCED, and setting forth specific proposals for consideration for the UNCED action programme. Members of the secretariat took part in the second substantive session of the Preparatory Committee (18 March to 5 April 1991) during which preparations for the Conference were moved forward; a large number of programme and action options were considered; a working group on legal and institutional issues was established; and the papers being prepared for the negotiations on conventions on climate were reviewed and welcomed, with the Committee urging that the conventions be finalized by 1992. In his remarks to the session, the Secretary-General of UNCED paid "a special tribute to UNEP and to our other UN-system collaborators for entering fully into partnership with us in making this preparatory process the finest and most effective example I know of co-ordination and co-operation within the UN family".

11. Within its resources, UNEP has made every effort to contribute fully to the preparations for UNCED. By decision 15/1 the Governing Council approved a supplementary appropriation of $35 million for the supplementary programme in 1990-1991, including $1 million for preparations for UNCED (under activity 20). In light of the additional demands being made on UNEP by the General Assembly and the UNCED Preparatory Committee, the Executive Director proposes that the appropriation be increased from $1 million to $2.5 million (see UNEP/GC.16/15/Add.1, para. 6 (c) and annex II).